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ABSTRACT

The experience in learning safe behavior reported in this monograph evolved from a group of elementary school teachers who wanted to explore approaches which would develop safe behavior in elementary school children integrally with other learning experiences, rather than merely to pursue the inculcation of safety facts, rules, and information. Thus, the teacher-pupil experiences reported in this project give primary attention to safety as an integral part of their teaching of other basic learnings, such as science, language arts, and social studies. These experiences are designed to offer the child behavioral alternatives in subsequent situations, so that he can assess conditions of low-risk or high-risk and select the safer course of action. In this way, the participating teachers found that safety considerations become part of the child's total experience both in and out of school. (Author/SES)

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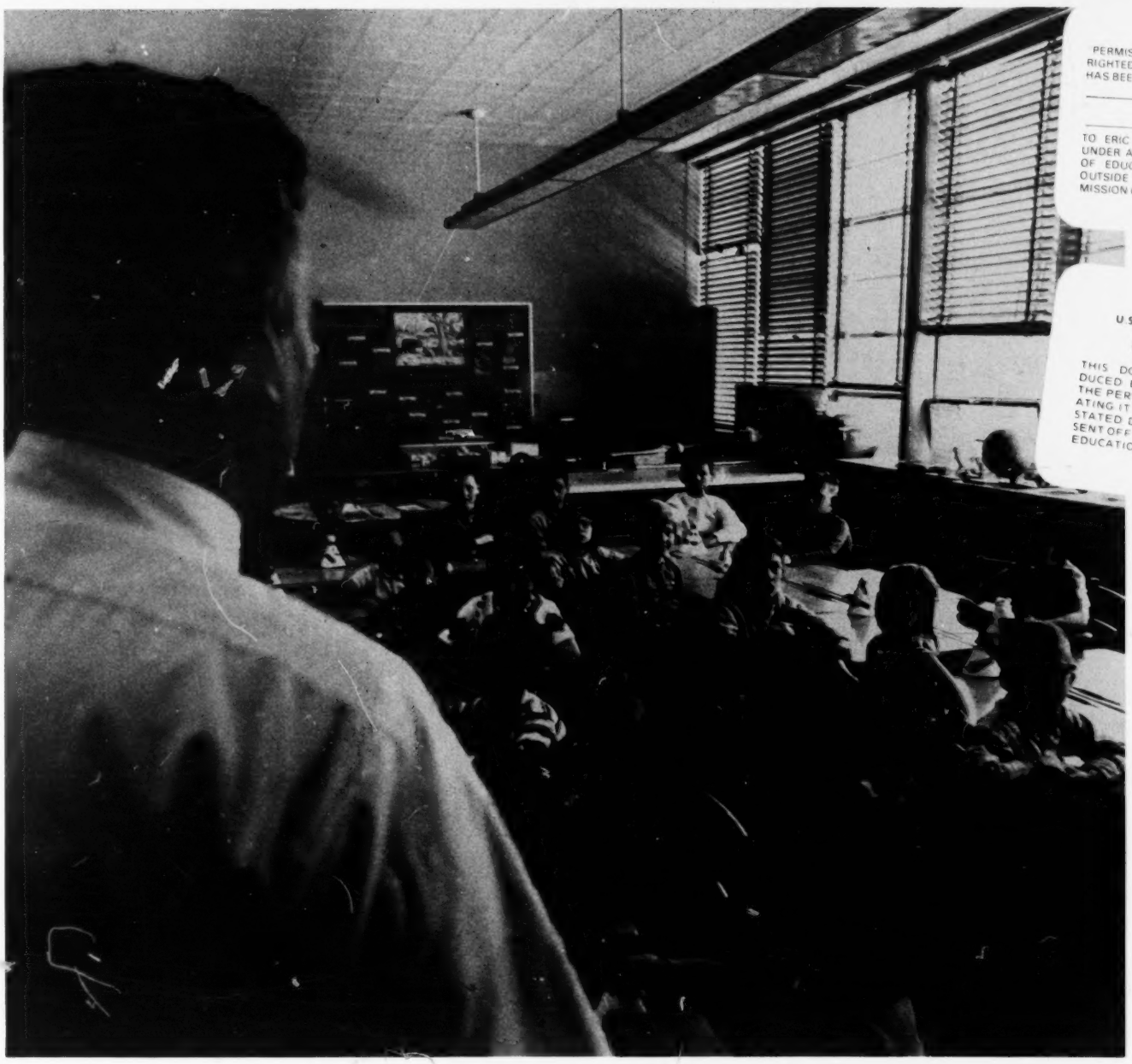
WHERE THE LEARNING IS



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WHERE THE LEARNING IS

A Project in Safety Education Programming
in the Flintstone and Valley View Schools
of Prince George's County, Maryland

a cooperative project

of

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Teachers from two of the County's elementary schools carried out the project with pupils in their respective classrooms. Miss Phyllis Dunan, assistant principal, and Mrs. JoAnn Beach, William Diehl, Mrs. Anne Hedstrom, Miss Beverly Murray, Mrs. Florence Polinsky, and Miss Vickie Wentzel—all teachers at the Valley View School—participated in the project. Flintstone School teachers included Mrs. Myrtie Bader, Mrs. Janice Gauger, Mrs. Virginia Kordons, Mrs. Shirley Lindenburg, and Mrs. Ayako Stidhams.

The cooperative effort which produced this monograph also involved the leadership of Harold L. Lambert, elementary supervisor of the Board of Education of Prince George's County; Phillip G. Stroup, president-elect of the Prince George's County Educator's Association; Joseph A. Logan, principal, Valley View School; Herbert E. Ryle, principal, Flintstone School; and Norman Key, executive secretary, National Commission on Safety Education. C. Steven Bittner, assistant executive secretary of the Prince George's County Educator's Association and field services representative of the Maryland State Teachers Association, also participated as the project evolved.

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INTRODUCTION

Many teachers may feel that including safety in their curriculum would necessitate the teaching of an extra subject and the setting aside of time each week to devote to the safety "curriculum." No one need tell a teacher that this is impractical from the standpoint of "finding the time." What, then, can be done to incorporate this vital content into all areas of the curriculum?

The teachers who prepared this material answer this question from their own experiences. Each of them sought opportunities during their day-to-day class activities to introduce safety concepts. In reviewing their efforts they said that natural or appropriate incorporation of safety content was vital to success.

COME TO SCHOOL SAFELY!

WHAT WE BELIEVE

This experience in learning safe behavior evolved during a six-month cooperative effort by a group of Prince George's County, Maryland, teachers, supported by their school administration and by their local, state, and national education associations. The group wanted to explore approaches which would develop safe behavior in elementary school children integrally with other learning experiences, rather than merely to pursue the inculcation of safety facts, rules, and information.

Educators and behavioral scientists have found that the objectives of learning are clearer and more meaningful when viewed in behavioral terms than when viewed in traditional ways. This is particularly true in teaching and learning safe behavior. Working with situations in their natural relationships to daily activities fosters the kinds of learning that influence behavior. For this reason, the teachers who participated in this project gave primary attention to safety as an integral part of their teaching of other basic learnings, such as science, language arts, and social studies.

The group believed that this approach to learning safe behavior would be more effective and more meaningful than separate lessons devoted solely to an abstract concept called "safety." The group further believed that the learning of patterns for safe living should contribute to the purpose of all education—making life richer and more effective. In this sense, learning experiences which include safety as an integral concept often served to extend and enrich other basic learnings. Further, in subsequent situations offering behavioral alternatives, the child is likely to assess conditions of low risk or high risk and to select the safer course of action. Safety considerations now are a part of his experiences; they include aspects to be weighed, compared, arranged, used—a part of all he learns in school and out, in his work and play, while alone or with others.

Those who were involved in the project hope this monograph describing some of the vital teacher-pupil experiences will be helpful to others.

APPROACHES USED IN SUBJECT AREAS

The eleven teachers participating in this project found it practical to include classroom safety experiences in their daily work in social studies, science, language arts, mathematics, dramatics, and health.

Social Studies

Social studies opens the door to a wide variety of safety activities. Because of the nature of the subject, it incorporates almost every other possible area of learning. The teacher would find it difficult to present any well-planned unit without using activities drawn from many other subject areas.

A typical fifth-grade unit on "Colonial Life" gave one safety-sensitive teacher the opportunity to put the spotlight on safety naturally and informally. A study of colonial homes and occupations pointed out that fire was essential for heat and light, besides playing an important role in many occupations of the period. The lack of moden machinery made it necessary that early colonists know how to handle many tools. Weapons and firearms were, of course, household items. Means of transportation were much different from those of today, as were games and sports. Overnight trips exposed pioneers to dangers that many of today's children may experience while camping. By guiding children into a comparison of early life in America with the way they live today, we can help them develop an understanding of the need for safety awareness. They can formulate and investigate such questions as—

- How did early settlers protect their homes from fire?
- Do we do the same today? Do we know more about fire safety?
- Are we better prepared and equipped to protect ourselves from fire?
- Was it necessary for colonial children to understand firearms and tools?
- What should they have known?
- What should we know about firearms? About tools?
- How do modern firearms differ from those used long ago?

FOR SAFE
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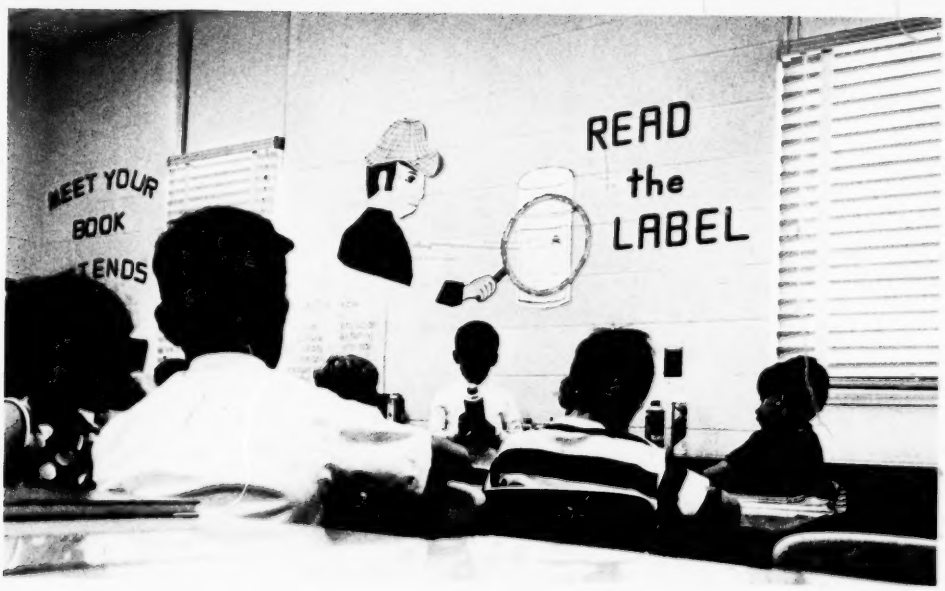
HURRICANE


MEET YOUR
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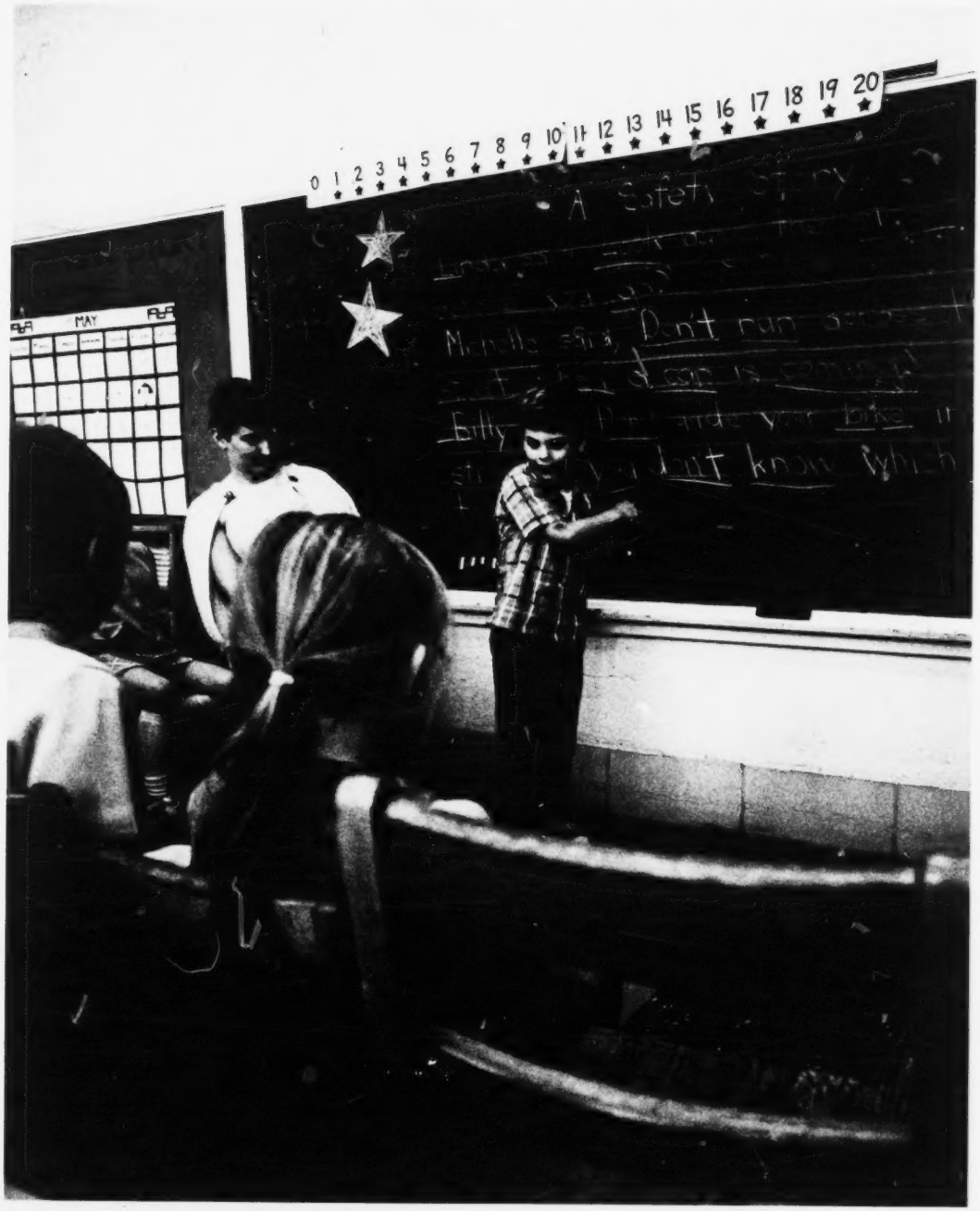
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
A Safety Story
MAY

MEASURINC

Safety Code
1. Check and double check the rockets and launcher.
2. Protect rockets and launcher.
3. Have Safety posters ready.
4. Reviewing safety posters and procedures.
5. Stay in your seat on the bus.
6. Keep your feet out of the aisles.
7. Talk softly.
8. Keep your hands to yourself.
9. Check rocket for damage.
10. Carefully repack parachutes.
11. Check launcher.
12. Clear launch area.
13. Carefully insert the igniter wire.
14. Remove safety interlock pin.
15. Carefully attach micro clips.
16. Move back ten feet from launch pad.

The teacher did not have to digress from the "Colonial Life" unit to teach safety to the class. Safety ideas were there to become an integral part of their learning. Some of the children will undoubtedly become interested in hunting. They will need to know how to handle and use firearms. They will have benefited from studying something that is interesting to them as well as useful in terms of respect for weapons.

A sixth-grade class involved in a natural resources unit discovered a place for safety learnings in a textbook which discussed the dangers of forest fires to our Pacific Northwest. This was the starting point for further research and the discovery of other areas of safety. The class found water safety to be another area that motivated them. Aside from group discussion, some other activities included special reports on the work of forest rangers, fire jumpers, and the Coast Guard; diagrams of where safety equipment is carried on boats of different sizes; comparisons of modern water travel with that of earlier times; demonstrations of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and of the inflation of life jackets. The important thing to be remembered here is that these activities were integral parts of the social studies unit. No additional time was required.

When the unit was completed and the teacher introduced the next area of study on energy, the children showed their increased awareness of safety by bringing into discussion the various areas of safety involved in such a unit. Such carryover of safety considerations into other units of study is the best evaluation of the success of this program.

One other example of a teacher's effort to work with safety in the daily program centered around a third-grade unit on homes. During the course of the unit, a large floor plan was drawn on the bulletin board, and children were asked to mark the places where accidents had occurred in their homes. From this the class discovered where they and their families needed to be most careful in their own homes.

After seeing a filmstrip on the construction of a house, the group discussed the need for safety in the construction itself, and why children need to be careful when they are around buildings under construction. Since a new addition to the school was being built at the time, they had an opportunity to visit an actual building site and observe safety measures being applied by workmen.

These illustrations of the integration of safety and social studies instruction show how we were able to make this plan function for us. The teachers comprising our experimental group agree that the children developed many basic understandings and attitudes that will help them in their daily lives. The students have become generally more safety-conscious and are better able to evaluate their own behavior.

Science

There are many opportunities to correlate safety with science. In this area, safety is often taken for granted. If the teacher becomes aware of the safety factors involved in his unit and attempts to present them to the class in a project/experiment rather than lecture manner, the students become "safety minded." In this project, three of the members successfully correlated safety with science.

A second-grade class worked on a weather unit. Along with the usual learning experiences about precipitation, cloud formation, thunder, and lightning, the class becomes involved in "weather safety." Safety applies, for example, in dressing for the weather situation. This particular class used doll cut-outs. The teacher would give a weather forecast and each child would dress his doll accordingly. The class also became involved in a raincoat experiment.

Besides working with what we consider typically scientific projects, this second-grade teacher incorporated into her weather unit drama, music, and art projects. Role-playing became very effective in learning safe behavior appropriate for use during thunderstorms. In this instance, the beating of a drum represented thunder; turning the lights on and off simulated lightning. Within the room were mock-ups of a tree, a television, and some electrical appliances. Half of the class role-played negative behavior during this type of storm. The other half portrayed positive behavior. In studying about the wind, the class learned the song "Let's Go Fly a Kite" and discussed its meaning, paying particular attention to weather safety involved with kite flying. Later the children made kites and flew them on the playground. As a culminating activity, they identified safe practices connected with weather conditions. Each child then made a weather poster depicting one of these practices.

Two sixth-grade classes worked together on a space unit. It provided many opportunities to incorporate safety instruction. In the introduction to space exploration, much of the awareness of space program safety came from teacher-student discussions. Sixth-graders were knowledgeable about the space program, particularly the Gemini and Apollo Missions. They needed, however, to become aware of the earlier projects. The teachers posed questions: "Why, during early explorations, did the spacecraft contain only scientific equipment?" "Why did a suborbital flight precede an orbital flight?" and "Why has a safety latch been built into all the space capsules?" Through library assignments and teacher-pupil discussions the needed information was obtained and evaluated on the basis of safety factors.

As a culminating activity the classes built launching pads and model rockets with electrically ignited engines. The children recognized the importance to safety of various rocket parts, such as the parachute and nosecone. They also saw the need for bystanders and the person in charge of the launching to be away from the launching pad when all was ready to go. The classes then wrote a safety code for building and launching model rockets.

Language Arts

The study of language offers many opportunities for teachers to incorporate experiences which lead to desirable safe behavior. The participating classroom teachers reported many successful approaches.

A first-grade group discussed safe and unsafe practices in the classroom and school. Their ideas were written in experience stories and used for reading and handwriting activities. Some second-grade pupils summarized all of the weather safety ideas they discovered. They rewrote these ideas in the form of simple statements. Posters were made to illustrate the ideas. Another group used a basal reading story about a boy's accident with a pair of scissors to discuss the safe use of classroom articles, such as pencils, scissors, rulers, and other sharp or pointed objects. A third-grade group, after reading a basal reader story which involved an incident with fire, was stimulated to learn more about fire safety. They visited the school library and selected books on safety to use in the classroom. One second-grade teacher asked pupils to bring from home bottles, boxes, and cans which had contained common household products. They learned to read the labels and found that many of these were hazardous if not properly used or stored. This activity built safe behavior concepts and expanded vocabulary simultaneously. Still another group drew pictures to summarize what they learned about school safety and mounted these pictures on a large paper roller. Each child then dictated a story about his picture. These stories were recorded on tape in the same order as the pictures on the roller. The result was a sound motion picture.

A third-grade teacher reported that she used basal reader stories to initiate discussion, illustrate safe practices, and act out safety practices as they apply to weather and clothing, bicycles, pets, and camping. The group wrote their own safety guidelines, creative stories, and poems and acted out mishaps which had occurred during the day, with emphasis on how they could have been prevented.

One sixth-grade teacher reported success with creative writing. She supplied the first line or two setting up a safety story, and the pupils completed it. As mentioned earlier, one of the sixth-grade groups studied space exploration and rocketry. They developed a code of safe practices for making and launching rockets.

Mathematics

Elements of safety were discovered in mathematics. A discussion was held about the way measurements help us live safely. Swimming pool depths are marked for our safety. Clearance markings on railroad overpasses and overhead highways give truck drivers the maximum height of a loaded truck which will pass under them safely.

Children brought out the importance of numbers in traffic safety signs. Examples include signs which state how many pounds a bridge can hold, that a lane ends in 2,000 feet, or speed limits in miles per hour.

The children visited a construction site to see for themselves the importance of measuring in the building of safe houses.

Dramatics

Creative dramatics and role-playing in primary and intermediate grades will help children work out, imaginatively, better answers to their problems in safety. Through a series of events having dramatic unity and relating to the everyday experiences of the child, a play, written, acted, and staged by the children, becomes a realistic scene. Safety attitudes built through drama tend to be meaningful because they are free from nonessential details.

A second-grade class thought of writing and giving a play to illustrate what happens to the child who doesn't have good safety habits. After discussing desirable behavior, they used the tape recorder to preserve their ideas. Later they acted out their play for another group.

Puppets were used to act out hazardous situations in the home. One puppet routine showed what a child can do if he discovers a poisonous product stored in a lower kitchen cabinet. The puppet reminded mother that such products should be on a high shelf away from babies.

Health

Two second-grade teachers worked together in presenting a unit on food. Children brought in bottles, boxes, and cans commonly found in kitchens. This provided an opportunity for reading, vocabulary enrichment, and group discussions. The children also grew molds and looked at other food which had spoiled. This provided the basis for a study of the causes of food spoilage. Among the activities which grew out of this study were role-playing of such situations as good and bad manners at mealtime, behavior in the cafeteria, proper preparation and storing of food, and correct handling of kitchen utensils. Films on food safety and books from the school library were used to enrich this unit. A TV program concerning a grocery store was viewed and became the basis for discussion and demonstrations of the refrigeration and packaging of food. Prior to a field trip, the children and teachers discussed the types of food which they should and should

not take. During one lunch period, the teacher on duty had a question-and-answer period about safety in the cafeteria and in the care of foods.

GENERAL SAFETY LEARNINGS

Once classes become safety-minded, there are more and more opportunities to practice safety in the classrooms. Children themselves will initiate discussions. They can best be motivated by being asked about their own experiences.

Often, the seasons of the year present different problems and concerns for youngsters. Riding bikes in the spring and playing in the snow in winter provide ideal launching points for discussion. Most teachers do discuss these problems as they arise. The important thing that we discovered was that safety presented as a list of "don'ts" had little meaning. The most that children seem to get out of this method is the ability to recite safety rules. To make safety learnings valuable to them the children must be involved in things they can actively do and see.

One second-grade teacher found that forming a safety club helped to keep the class involved with safety. The children kept folders, shared stories, and wrote a safety pledge for the club. Meetings were held once every two weeks.

Common everyday occurrences can be made into a simple lesson. For example, if a child falls out of his chair, a few minutes might be used to discuss what did happen and what could have happened and to demonstrate the proper way to sit. When children mishandle scissors, correct handling can be demonstrated and a discussion held of why this method is safer. The class will remember the safe practice longer than if the teacher merely says "Don't swing your scissors around."

Another teacher in our group used a tape recorder to catch the normal classroom activity Later, the children evaluated their behavior and listened for unsafe practices.

There is an abundance of safety material available to help teachers. One teacher and her class enjoyed using an idea from a safety magazine. A child would dress in a paper cape and hat to resemble the "Safety Sleuth" character and read safety tips to the class in a humorous voice. This was an enjoyable and valuable activity.

In a classroom where current-events reporting was a part of everyday activity, the children looked for accident reports and discussed how the accidents could have been prevented.

These activities take very little time but help keep safety alive in the classroom. They are not necessarily related to any particular subject area, but serve a purpose of their own.

EVALUATION

At the outset of this project, the teachers involved were hesitant and unsure of their actual task. As time passed and the experiment went from its "talking stage" into its personal-experience stage, teachers returned to our large group meetings increasingly more confident and enthusiastic about their progress. They came to realize that the teaching of safe living could be incorporated into many areas of study and need not be a separate unit.

As one teacher aptly stated, "Safety can be incorporated into all areas if the teacher is 'safety-conscious.' Being a part of a group like this makes you think of the safety aspects of anything you teach or do with your children. The children are more conscious about safety because you are."

The opportunity for teaching safety as an integral part of our curriculum has always been with us. All too often, however, we have overlooked such opportunities or have been unable to see that they existed. Teachers can include safety in every subject area if they will make use of opportunities as they arise. The teachers who participated in this program have become and will remain more conscious of safety study than ever before in their teaching careers.